THE ILLUSION OF GUARDIANSHIP

HOW THE GENERALS PLUNDER AMIDST MANUFACTURED CRISES

Arbaz Khan

18 July 2025

This is a text-only digital edition. For the complete version with all embedded media, please visit the original online publication.

Pakistan's military elite has engineered a devastating alchemy... transforming the nation's wealth into private fortunes while transmuting public despair into patriotic fervor. Behind the façade of khaki-clad protectors lies a rapacious machinery that has systematically looted Pakistan's resources with the precision of a Swiss timepiece.

One, not so recent revelation that retired Lt. Gen. Muzammil Hussain alone allegedly diverted $753 million from the Tarbela Dam project stands not as an aberration, but as standard procedure in an institutionalized kleptocracy. This three-star general, like countless others before him, simply skipped accountability hearings with contemptuous ease, citing "personal reasons" while the national treasury bled over a trillion rupees.

The Credit Suisse leaks merely confirmed what Pakistanis have long whispered in fear: that the military's motto has ossified into "Greed is Good," a creed enabling generals to stash billions in secret vaults while their countrymen scavenge for bread.

The deep-seated colonial DNA of this predatory institution reveals itself in its land conquests; a modern-day zemindari system where generals

seize territories under the hollow pretext of security. Entire neighborhoods in Islamabad's heart, Kashmir's prized valleys, Gilgit-Baltistan's strategic heights, and Balochistan's mineral-rich expanses have been transformed into personal fiefdoms.

Deplorably these generals strive to fashion themselves as scions of the House of Rothschild, though most hail from humbler origins. Yet, through a rigged system of promotion; where none dare scrutinize the frayed threads of their morality, nor mark their flaws in ink, they ascend. Thus, they breach the gates of the Elite Club, where, with relish, they partake in fortunes amassed by the crooked calculus of self-reward.

Consider the grotesque luxury of the Chaklala Garrison suites; essentially seven-star hotels with helipads for corps commanders, while nearby communities drink arsenic-laced sludge. Or the spectacle of General Raheel Sharif receiving 90 acres of prime Lahore farmland as a "gift" upon retirement, a mere fraction of his property portfolio. The military has metastasized into Pakistan's largest real estate conglomerate, its tentacles stretching from Karachi's ports to the northern highlands, seizing land with the ruthlessness of a conquering army rather than a guardian of the state.

Simultaneously, a sophisticated distraction apparatus operates with brutal, clinical efficiency. State media transforms into a weaponized tool, flooding airwaves with "Indian aggression" spectacles when inflation eviscerates household budgets, or manufacturing blasphemy cases to fracture farmer protests into terrified silence. While Baloch children shiver in roofless schools above trillion-dollar mineral veins, the establishment hypes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as national salvation; a gilded illusion masking its reality as collateral for Beijing's encroachments and a conduit for generals' kickbacks. The ultimate sleight of hand remains the judicial abyss where corruption cases against military figures vanish like smoke, while political dissidents like Imran Khan face expedited railroading amidst orchestrated public furor. When accountability's shadow momentarily looms, escape routes are prearranged: witness Lt. Gen. Asif Ghafoor relocating his plundered wealth to Scottish estates under Asim Munir's watchful blackmail, or Lt. Gen. Nadeem Anjum securing his Canadian exile with carefully negotiated "guarantees" of silence.

The global enablers of this systemic pillage operate with cynical impunity. Swiss banking secrecy laws provided the perfect shroud for generals like Zahid Ali Akbar Khan to hide 15.5

million francs even after a domestic graft conviction. Western governments, complicit through silent acquiescence, welcome these kleptocrats with golden visas, turning a blind eye to stolen fortunes that transform London's avenues into generals' boulevards. Meanwhile, the military's business empire metastasizes behind jingoistic branding; from pizza franchises to sprawling banks, all feasting on tax exemptions while ordinary Pakistanis choke on IMF-dictated austerity. The recent leak of General Bajwa's family tax records laid bare the mechanics of instant billionaires: commercial plots "forgotten" in declarations, daughters-in-law conjuring billion-rupee fortunes overnight, and wealth multiplying 100-fold during military tenures. This transcends mere corruption; it is a vertically integrated looting syndicate operating with state sanction.

Yet beneath the crushing weight of despair, embers of resistance flicker with quiet tenacity. The Baloch refusal to surrender their mountains to extraction empires, the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement's meticulous chronicling of the disappeared, and the lawyers who still dare challenge generals in court... these are the fragile threads of defiance. Students in Lahore chant verses of Faiz Ahmed Faiz beneath the baton's shadow, farmers in Sindh defiantly replant crops

on confiscated lands, and journalists become digital ghosts, smuggling truth when presses are silenced. They remember rivers that ran cleaner, universities that once forged thinkers instead of sycophants, and a national pride measured not by missile parades but by children's literacy. The generals, drunk on stolen opulence, miscalculate profoundly: believing luxury bunkers abroad secure their future, they forget true security evaporates when a people cease believing in their rulers' meticulously crafted fictions. Pakistan's redemption will not be drafted in GHQ's sterile war rooms or Parliament's hollow chambers, but forged in the collective, silent refusal of a street vendor, a poet, or a village teacher to applaud the emperor's invisible clothes any longer. Until that dawn, the nation remains suspended, gasping between the glittering mirage the generals engineered and the suffocating mire they created, a purgatory as meticulously calibrated as it is morally perverse.

Epilogue... This meticulously engineered kleptocracy functions not merely through avarice, but through the calculated annihilation of all countervailing forces. The judiciary, that last frail scaffold of accountability, lies eviscerated, not by neglect, but by deliberate, surgical strikes orchestrated from the shadows of the GHQ. The ISI, IB, MI, FIA, and their tentacled

auxiliaries have, for decades, amputated due process, poisoned judicial independence, and vanished inconvenient jurists, transforming courts into mere notaries for the generals' grand larceny. Without this enforced judicial necrosis, the brazen plunder of dams, minerals, and farmland would collapse under the weight of its own illegality.

Yet the generals do not feast alone in this necropolis of stolen futures. **They preside over a vast, perverse consortium; a kleptocratic cartel where the sequined hands of PML-N dynasts, the feudal grip of PPP barons, the sanctimonious complicity of JI clerics, the deal-making mullahs of JUI, and the mercenary cadres of MQM all reach deep into the national till. These political franchises, ostensibly at odds, remain united in their parasitism upon the withered body of the state. They are partners in the grand despoliation, their rivalries mere theatre to divert the masses while they jointly auction sovereignty and suffocate hope.**

This is no ordinary corruption; it is a mafia of unparalleled scale, **a syndicate sustained by anti-Pakistan interests abroad who profit from its engineered chaos. With their vaults secured in Western capitals and their consciences numbed by impunity, this cabal; generals and politicians**

alike, wages war upon the very essence of Pakistan. They devour the nation's grain while children starve, seize its land while peasants weep, and drain its coffers while schools crumble. Their alliance is the ultimate treason: a united front against the people they betray daily, mortgaging generations to come for palaces in Park Lane and silence in Sindh. Until this predatory compact is shattered, until the judiciary is resurrected from its grave and the people's wrath falls upon both khaki and khaddar thieves alike, the nation remains shackled, gasping not merely under the weight of stolen billions, but beneath the crushing silence of a justice system murdered by its own guardians.

...Concluded.

To share your reflections with the author please click here to go to comments section on the web.